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IN THE MOHAVE

As I rode down the arroyo through yuccas belled with bloom
I saw a last year's stalk lift dried hands to the light,
Like age at prayer for death within a careless room,
Like one by day o'ertaken, whose sick desire is night.

And as I rode I saw a lean coyote lying
All perfect as in life upon a silver dune,
Save that his feet no more could flee the harsh light's spying,
Save that no more his shadow would cleave the sinking moon.

O cruel land, where form endures, the spirit fled!
You chill the sun for me with your gray sphinx's smile,
Brooding in the bright silence above your captive dead,
Where beat the heart of life so brief, so brief a while!

Patrick Orr